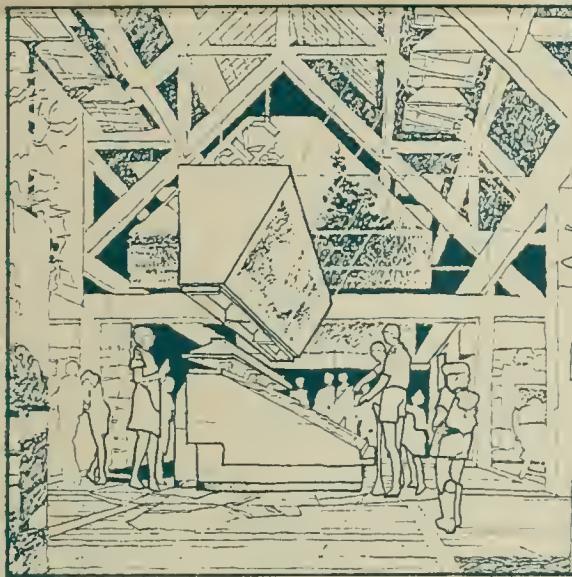


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# Montana Visitor Information Centers

Technical Appendices

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Montana Department of Commerce

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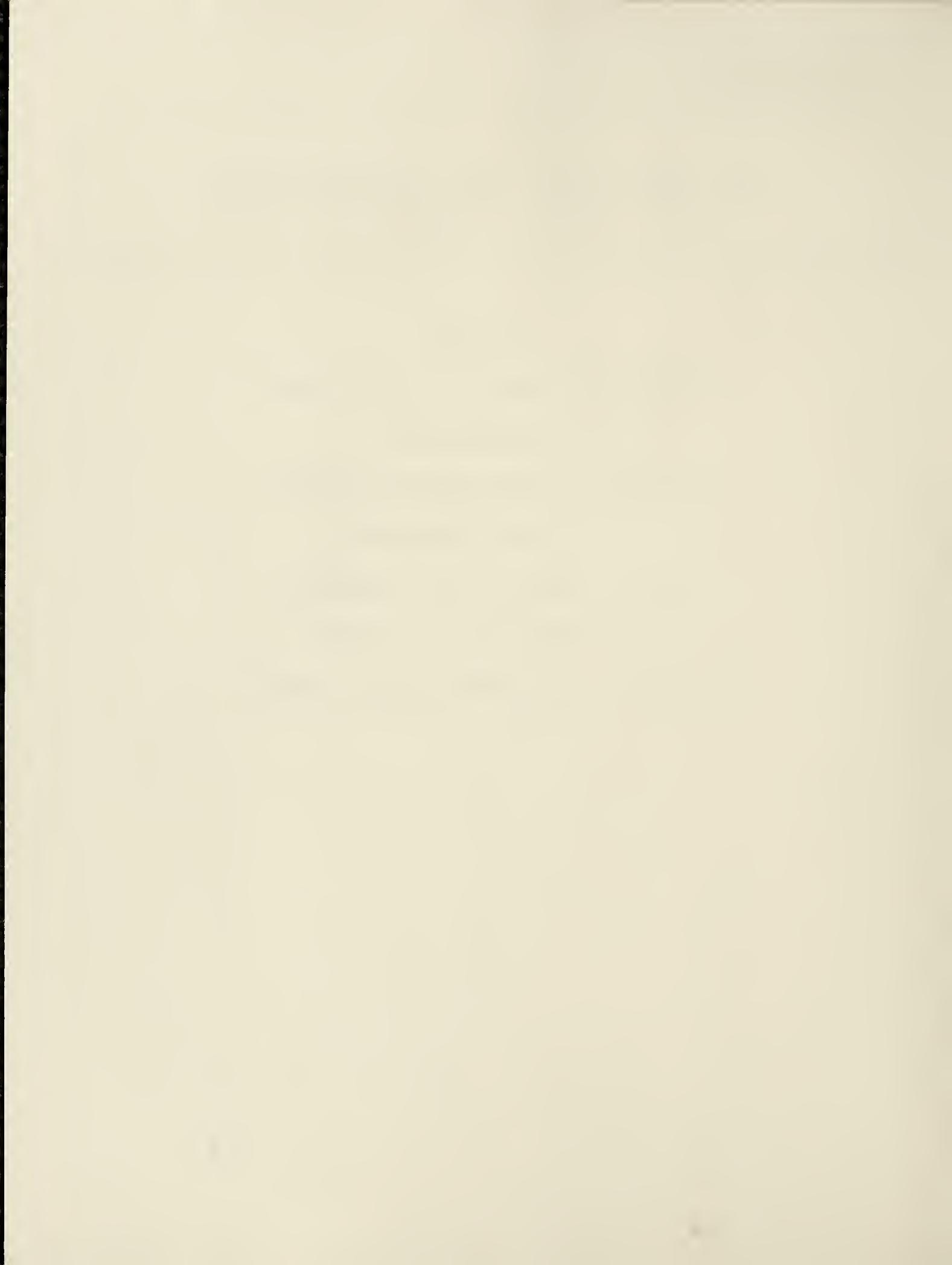
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# Technical Appendices

- A. HB 550
- B. Estimate of Potential Economic Impact
- C. Operating Plan
- D. Entrance and Site Selection Process
- E. Community Involvement
- F. VIC Construction Cost Breakdowns
- G. Non-Resident Visitor Comments
- H. Letters of Support from Agency Partners



## **Appendix A**

### **House Bill 550**

HOUSE BILL NO. 550

INTRODUCED BY VINCENT, HARP, YELLOWTAIL,  
HALLIGAN, PETERSON, PATTERSON, BISHOP,  
NOBLE, WILLIAMS

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, ACTING AS LEAD AGENCY IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHERS, TO PRESENT TO THE 52ND LEGISLATURE A PLAN FOR TOURIST WELCOMING AND INFORMATION CENTERS IN MONTANA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, travel and tourism are among Montana's leading industries and are steadily and rapidly increasing in importance in the Montana economy; and

WHEREAS, the competition among states and provinces to attract travelers and vacationers to scenic, recreational, and historic locations adds new dimensions to the efforts of each state and province to increase its share of the profits derived from this industry; and

WHEREAS, travel and tourism detract nothing from the attributes of Montana and the impact on the environment is negligible or subject to amelioration; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature intended that the proceeds of the lodging facility use tax enacted in 1987 be dedicated to the promotion of Montana's travel and tourism industries; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Commerce is charged with the responsibility of administering the uses of the proceeds of the lodging facility use tax; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that informing visitors to Montana of the many points of scenic interest, historical sites, and recreational opportunities awaiting them under the Big Sky promises benefits not only for the travel and tourism industry but also for all Montanans.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Department of commerce to present plan for welcoming and information centers.

(1) The department of commerce shall develop and present to the 52nd legislature on or before the second legislative day a plan for a system of up-to-date, technologically complete, and architecturally appropriate visitor welcoming and information centers to be located in Montana. The Department shall act as the lead agency in preparing the plan, in cooperation with the university system travel research program, the Department of Highways, the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, The Montana State University School of Architecture, and other appropriate agencies.

(2) The plan for welcoming and information centers must include:

- (a) designation of the most beneficial and cost-effective sites;
- (b) a determination of the land needed for the centers and the estimated cost of acquiring the land;
- (c) architectural and artistic designs for the centers that are consistent with the state of the art and that provide for all services necessary to achieve the purposes of [this act];
- (d) qualifications for personnel to staff the centers;
- (e) suggestions for periods during each year when full or partial staffing and operation of the centers is needed; and
- (f) a formal, documented proposal for funding the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of the centers.

Section 2. Funding. (1) Funding to implement [This Act] must be provided from existing appropriations as follows:

- (a) two-thirds by the university system from the special revenue fund in 15-65-121(1)(B); and
- (b) one-third by the Department of Highways from the special revenue fund.

(2) Total planning costs may not exceed \$49,000.

Section 3. Effective date. [This Act] is effective on passage and approval.



## Appendix B

### Estimates of Potential Economic Impacts

The following discussion is meant to illustrate the potential economic benefits to be gained from the construction and operation of Visitor Information Centers at a number of Montana entrances.

Based on information gathered by Colorado State University for the Colorado Tourism Board (Tierney and Haas, 1988) and by the Virginia Division of Tourism (1987), estimates of additional visitor expenditures attributable to Visitor Information Centers may be made.

For this example, we will assume that the Visitor Information Centers would remain open for the seasons suggested in the proposal. We will use traffic information for the seven proposed entrances. The process used to calculate additional benefits is explained below followed by the actual calculations. Letters and numbers in the text refer to specific steps in the calculations that follow.

The first step is to take the number of groups entering the state (A) and estimate the number that will actually stop at the Visitor Information Center. The state of Michigan has found a turn-in percentage of 10%. Figures from Colorado indicate a turn-in of approximately 7%. These figures reflect the percentage of all traffic (resident and non-resident) turning into the Visitor Information Center. Other states have indicated turn-in percentages of 15% for their Visitor Information Centers.

In its Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Northern Continental Divide Visitor Center (1988), Glacier National Park estimated that 15% of passing traffic would stop at the Visitor Center, while 19% of traffic crossing the Continental Divide at Crowsnest Pass in Canada stop at the Frank Slide Interpretive Center. Again, that is the percentage of all traffic passing that point.

As we are interested primarily in non-residents, who are more likely to turn in to a Visitor Information Center than are resident groups, we will assume a turn-in percentage of 15% (B.1).

The next step is to estimate the number of these turn-in groups who will actually be influenced to extend their length of stay in Montana as a result of information received at the VIC. Colorado found that about 13% of turn-ins extended their stay in the state as a result of information obtained at the VIC, while Virginia reported that 11% stayed longer. Accordingly, we will assume that 12% of turn-ins will increase their length of stay (B.2).

Next we need to estimate how much longer these groups stayed. Virginia reported an increased length of stay of 1.5 nights, while Colorado reported 2.2 days, which is probably about equivalent to 1.5 nights. Therefore we will assume that of those turn-in groups that stay longer, the average increased length of stay is 1.5 nights (B.3).

The final step is to multiply the additional nights spent by

the average group expenditure per night. The ITRR found in its 1988 study of non-resident travel in Montana that the average group expenditure for each night spent in Montana was \$63.13 for summer visitors and \$67.34 for spring/fall visitors. Inflating those 1988 dollars to 1990 dollars results in the following: \$68.93 for summer visitors and \$73.53 for spring/fall visitors (B.4).

The above calculations will yield an estimate of additional visitor expenditures attributable to increased length of stay in the state. However, the Colorado study also found that groups which stop at a VIC and do not stay additional nights in the state still spend more money than groups which don't stop at a VIC. The average daily expenditure overall for VIC users was 24% higher than for non-users; since much of that increase was found to be in the categories of entertainment and recreation, it is probably conservative to attribute half of the 24% increase in overall spending to information obtained at the VIC.

Therefore, additional economic benefit may be calculated for those groups stopping at a VIC but not increasing their length of stay. Those figures would be derived in the following manner.

Of the groups which turn in to a VIC, we estimated that 12% would stay an additional 1.5 nights. Based on the discussion above, we can expect the remaining 88% to spend an average of 24% more money, half of which (12%) we will attribute to their VIC stop (C.1).

Since the average daily expenditure for non-resident visitors in the summer is estimated to be \$68.93, we can expect an increase of approximately \$8.27 per day attributable to stopping at a VIC for summer visitors (C.2). Likewise, spring/fall visitors are estimated to spend an average of \$73.53 per day, therefore we can expect an increase of approximately \$8.82 per day attributable to stopping at a VIC for spring/fall visitors. The average trip length for highway travelers is approximately 4 nights, therefore we will multiply the per-day increase by four days (C.3).

These calculations yield an estimate of additional visitor expenditures attributable to information received at a Visitor Information Center for groups not spending additional nights in the state. Adding the above two sub-totals together (increased expenditures attributed to increased length of stay plus increased expenditures by groups not spending additional nights in the state) yields the total additional visitor expenditures that could be expected to occur as a result of operating a system of Visitor Information Centers in the State.

The reason for calculating the additional expenditures separately for summer-season and off-season visitors is two-fold. First, average daily expenditures are different for summer visitors and off-season visitors. Second, the type of traveler is different in the off-season compared to the summer. Summer travelers are generally vacationers with more flexible

travel itineraries, while off-season visitors are more likely to be business travelers, pass-through travelers, or people visiting relatives. These off-season visitors are less likely to be influenced to stay longer or to alter their travel plans than summer visitors. Because off-season visitors are less likely to be influenced by VIC information and thus are less likely to alter their travel plans, their additional expenditures, and the subsequent economic impact due to the VICs, will be significantly less than their summer counterparts. Exactly how much less is not known, but to be conservative we will assume that the economic impact due to VICs of an off-season visitor is 20% that of a summer visitor. Thus when calculations are made for off-season visitors, only 20% of that resulting total will be used (D and E).

#### **(A) Determining non-resident entries into Montana**

Non-resident entries (in groups) into the state during the proposed seasons of operation at seven VIC entrances, 1990/1989, (calculated from Department of Highways traffic figures and Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research non-resident proportions).

|                  | Summer<br>(May-Sept) | Off-Season |
|------------------|----------------------|------------|
| I-90 West        | 331,079              | 165,618    |
| I-15 North       | 96,856               | 59,127     |
| I-94             | 113,522              | 17,906     |
| I-90 East        | 137,829              | 81,427     |
| I-15 South       | 104,339              | 21,435     |
| West Yellowstone | 361,078              | 34,629     |
| Highway 2 East   | 41,328               | 6,751      |
| Total entries    | 1,186,031            | 386,893    |

#### **(B) Determining additional visitor nights and associated expenditures for summer visitors**

- 1) 1,186,031 groups x 0.15 (% of traffic turning into VIC) = 177,904 turn-ins
- 2) 177,904 x 0.12 (% of turn-ins extending stay) = 21,348 visitor groups extending stay
- 3) 21,348 x 1.5 (additional nights of stay) = 32,022 additional nights
- 4) 32,022 (additional nights) x \$68.93 (average daily expenditure) = \$2,207,276

\$2,207,276 = additional direct expenditures resulting from increased length of stay for summer visitors

#### **(C) Determining additional daily expenditures for groups not extending stay (summer)**

- 1) 177,904 turn-ins x 0.88 (% of turn-ins not extending stay) = 156,555 visitor groups
- 2) 156,555 x \$8.27 (average additional spending per day) = \$1,294,709
- 3) \$1,294,709 x 4 days (average length of stay) = \$5,178,836

\$5,178,836 = additional direct expenditures resulting from information received at Visitor Information Centers for summer visitors

#### **(D) Similar calculations for off-season visitors**

result in \$153,620 in additional direct expenditures resulting from increased length of stay (using an average daily expenditure of \$68.93 and then taking only 20% of that total)

**(E) Similar calculations for off-season visitors** result in \$360,349 in additional direct expenditures resulting from information received at Visitor Information Centers for those not extending their visit (using an average additional expenditure per day of \$8.82 and then taking only 20% of that total)

**Total of B, C, D and E = \$7,900,000 in additional direct expenditures resulting from operation of a system of Visitor Information Centers**

Applying a multiplier of 2.2, which was arrived at by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research in its study of the economic impact of non-resident travel, results in an estimate of the total -- direct, indirect and induced -- economic impact expected to accrue to the state as a result of operating a system of Visitor Information Centers.

**\$7,900,000 x 2.2 = \$17,380,000 in Total economic Impact**

Tierney, Patrick and Glenn Haas. 1988. Colorado

Welcome Centers: Their users and Influence on Length of Stay and Expenditures. Dept. of Recreation Resources and Landscape Architecture, Colorado State University. 59 pp.

Virginia Division of Tourism and U.S. Travel Data Center. 1987. Travel in Virginia: An Economic Report. 16 pp.

## Appendix C

### Operating Plan

#### Executive Summary

This document serves as the Operating Plan for the Montana Visitor Information Center (VIC) system. The VIC system would be administered by the Travel Montana office.

The VICs would serve two primary functions -- dissemination of travel information and interpretation of state resources. VICs would be staffed during all open hours, and staff would be a primary source of information to travelers. Information would be available in other forms as well, such as brochures, maps, and video. A telecommunications network would link each VIC with the Travel Montana Office in Helena. Interpretive displays would be designed to be both educational and inform visitors about recreational opportunities and attractions.

The key to a successful VIC operation is a friendly, helpful and informed staff. Paid staff would be the rule at the VICs, although volunteers could be used to supplement during peak periods. Supervisory staff would be expected to have some professional background, and all staff would participate in training.

The suggested seasons of operation vary from one VIC to the next, but generally the season would be April through October, or for some locations, year-round. Annual operating budgets likewise vary, ranging from \$32,000 to \$208,000 per VIC. The total annual operating budget for the VIC system is estimated at \$778,000.

#### Administration and Training

A statewide system of Visitor Information Centers would be administered by the Travel Montana office in the Department of Commerce. Travel Montana would provide the state travel information to be distributed at the VICs, and would make final decisions concerning what other materials would be distributed at the Centers.

Travel Montana would also provide overall training for VIC staff. Training sessions such as those held for the SuperHost program would be held for all VIC staff. In order that VIC staff are familiar with routes, attractions and destinations about which they will be asked by visitors, FAM (familiarization) tours would be organized for VIC staff as part of the training.

#### *Information and Interpretation Themes, Displays and Services*

As discussed in the proposal, operation of the VIC system would serve two primary, interrelated functions -- the provision of travel information and services, and interpretation of the natural, cultural and historical resources of the region and the state. Interpretation would be provided through displays and exhibits, similar to those found in National Park Service visitor centers. To orient visitors to the state, a large, three-dimensional map of Montana would be placed in each VIC.

State interpretive materials and exhibits would be developed by the appropriate state agencies (Fish, Wildlife and Parks, State Historical Society), with the cooperation of Federal agencies (Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service). Regional interpretive materials and exhibits would be developed by the local and regional organizations, with the assistance of the state agencies.

Information would be provided to travelers in a number of ways. Personal travel information would be provided by the staff of the VIC. For this reason, staff would be familiar with travel routes, attractions and destinations throughout the state. Written literature on specific routes, attractions, destinations, recreational opportunities and accommodations would be available free of charge. Video clips produced by the state and by individual tourism countries would be available for viewing in the VIC. Interpretive displays and exhibits would be produced in such a way as to be a source of information on opportunities, attractions and destinations throughout the state.

Some Centers might include a reservation system for accommodations. All would include up-to-date information about road and weather conditions, emergency, vehicle towing, and medical information.

## **Staffing Levels and Qualifications**

Staffing levels were determined by examining the traffic volumes expected during peak season, shoulder seasons, and off season, and the number of hours the VICs would be open each week. When traffic volumes are high, during the peak season, the number of staff on duty increases accordingly.

Two full-time supervisory staffers would be hired to manage each VIC. If possible, the supervisors should have a Bachelor's degree in tourism and/or recreation management, or a related field. Other staffers need not have such degrees, but would be trained through the SuperHost program, as well as the VIC training programs to be conducted by Travel Montana. All staff would participate in at least one FAM (Familiarization) tour in the spring in order to better acquaint them with attractions and activities available in their local and regional areas.

## **Season and Hours of Operation and Operating Cost Estimates**

Operating seasons were determined based primarily on highway traffic counts and a cost-benefit analysis of operating costs and estimated labor-income benefits. The primary objective was to maintain operations during months when the cost of operating the centers was lower than the labor income generated by increased expenditures. In some instances, it is proposed that VICs remain open during shoulder- season or off-season months when the estimated labor-income benefits are lower than the estimated operating expenses for that month. The rationale behind those instances is that the operation of the VICs should be viewed not exclusively in short-term economic-benefit terms, but also as an extension of the state's promotional effort. Remaining open during shoulder season months allows the state to contact visitors who otherwise might not be contacted, and these visitors may decide to later return to the state for vacation. The goal would be to extend the tourism season in Montana and thereby enhance economic impact. Also, even though operating costs in certain off-season months may exceed labor-income benefits, two points should be noted: 1) operation of the VICs during the summer season will more than make up for the relatively small operating losses incurred during off-season operations; and 2) labor-income benefits is a very conservative estimator of economic benefits; in effect, it is equivalent of using only 25% of the total economic impact as the benefit coefficient in the cost-benefit analysis.

## **Interstate 90 West**

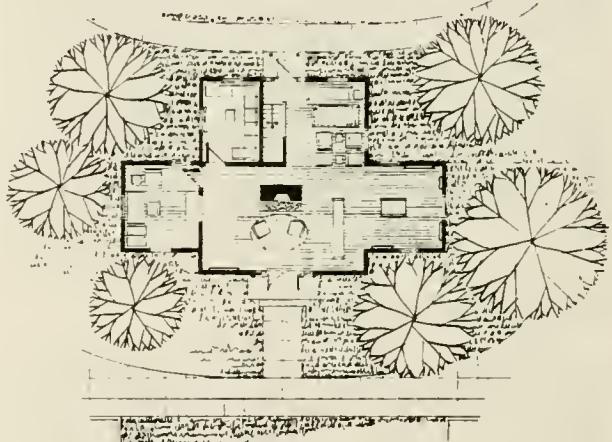
### **Suggested Season - year-round**

Hours - 8 AM to 8 PM Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day  
8 AM to 5 PM during shoulder seasons

Staffing - 3 People at one time (PAOT) in peak season (2 in evenings) = 6 FTE  
2 PAOT in shoulder seasons = 3.5 FTE  
1 PAOT in off-season = 2 FTE

### **Budget**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Salary - \$2204/week in peak season (15 weeks) | \$33,060  |
| \$1320/week in shoulder seasons (13 weeks)     | \$17,200  |
| \$792/week in off-season (24 weeks)            | \$19,000  |
| <br>   |           |
| Literature and Supplies                        | \$115,740 |
| Training                                       | \$ 3,000  |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities     | \$20,000  |
| <br>   |           |
| Total  | \$208,000 |



### Interstate 15 North

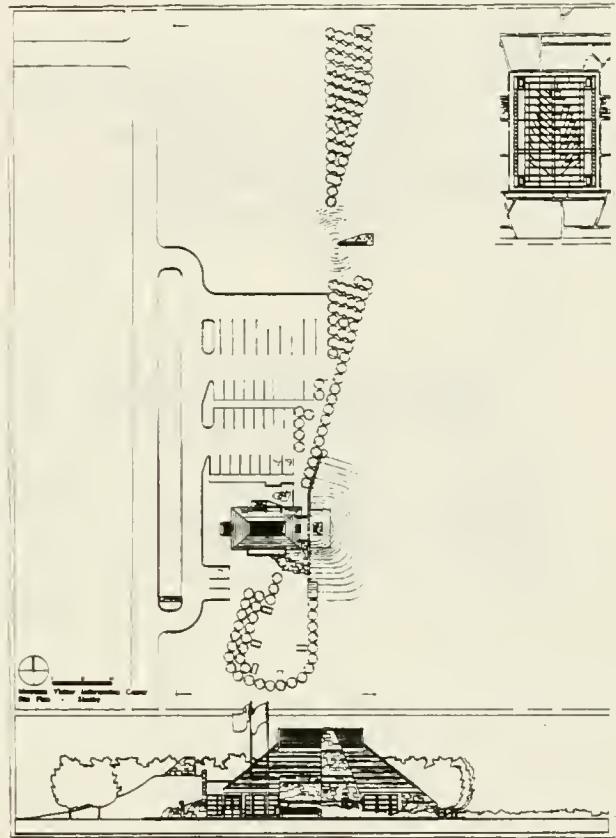
Suggested Season - April through December

Hours - 8 AM to 8 PM Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day  
8 AM to 5 PM during shoulder seasons

Staffing - 2 PAOT in peak season (1 in evenings) = 3.5 to 4  
FTE  
1 PAOT in shoulder seasons = 1.5 to 2 FTE

#### Budget

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Salary -- \$1500/week in peak season (15 weeks) | \$22,500 |
| \$792/week in shoulder seasons (25 weeks)       | \$19,800 |
| <br>  |          |
| Literature and Supplies                         | \$31,700 |
| Training  | \$2,000  |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities      | \$13,000 |
| <br>  |          |
| Total   | \$89,000 |



### Interstate 94

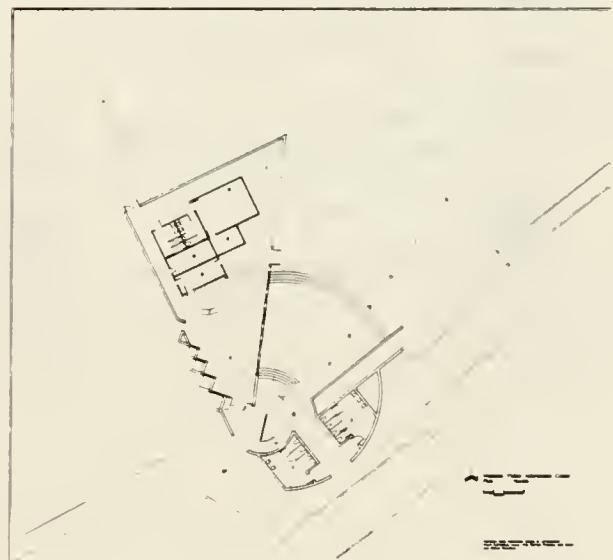
Suggested Season -- April through October

Hours - 8 AM to 8 PM Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day  
8 AM to 5 PM during shoulder seasons

Staffing - 2 PAOT in peak season (1 in evenings) = 3.5 to 4  
FTE; 1 PAOT in shoulder seasons = 1.5 to 2 FTE

#### Budget

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Salary -- \$1500/week in peak season (15 weeks) | \$22,500 |
| \$792/week in shoulder seasons (17 weeks)       | \$13,500 |
| <br>  |          |
| Literature and Supplies                         | \$40,000 |
| Training  | \$2,000  |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities      | \$11,000 |
| <br>  |          |
| Total   | \$89,000 |



## Interstate 90 East

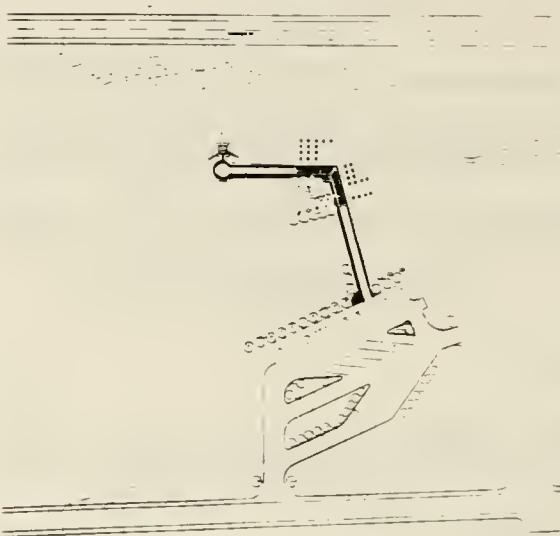
Suggested Season - year-round

Hours - 8 AM to 8 PM Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day  
8 AM to 5 PM during shoulder seasons

Staffing - 2 PAOT in peak season (1 in evenings) = 3.5 to 4 FTE; 1 PAOT in shoulder seasons = 1.5 to 2 FTE

### Budget

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Salary -- \$1500/week in peak season (15 weeks) | \$22,500  |
| \$792/week in shoulder seasons (7 weeks)        | \$ 5,600  |
| \$396/week in off-season (30 weeks)             | \$11,900  |
| <br>  |           |
| Literature and Supplies                         | \$ 67,000 |
| Training  | \$ 2,000  |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities      | \$25,000  |
| <br>  |           |
| Total   | \$134,000 |



## Interstate 15 South

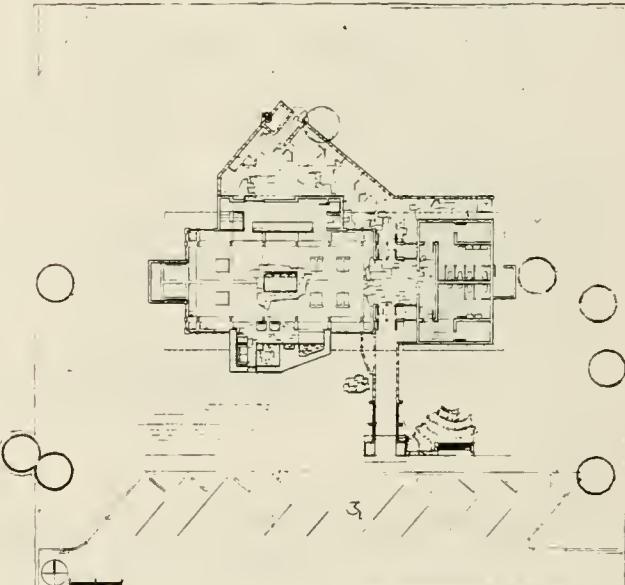
Suggested Season -- April through October

Hours -- 8 AM to 6 PM

Staffing - 2 PAOT in July and August = 3.5 to 4 FTE  
1 PAOT remainder of summer = 2 FTE

### Budget

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Salary -- \$1500/week in peak season (9 weeks) | \$13,500 |
| \$792/week in shoulder seasons (23 weeks)      | \$18,300 |
| <br>   |          |
| Literature and Supplies                        | \$32,200 |
| Training                                       | \$ 2,000 |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities     | \$10,000 |
| <br>   |          |
| Total  | \$76,000 |



## Highway 191/287

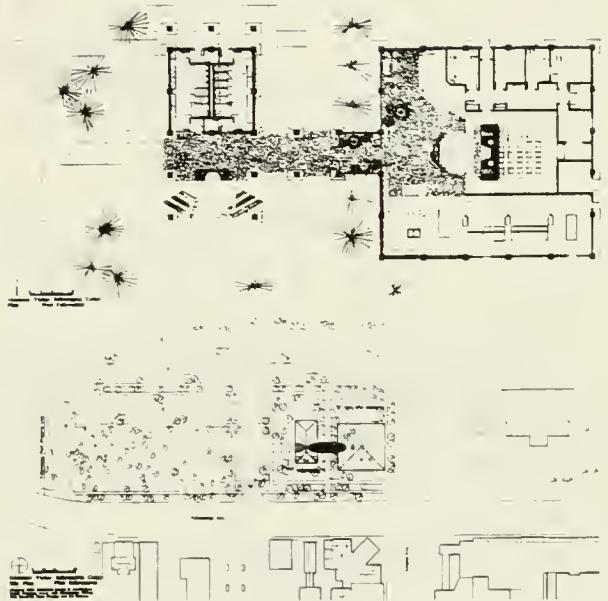
Suggested Season - year-round

Hours -- 8 AM to 8 PM May 15 to September 30  
8 AM to 5 PM Mon.- Fri. from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30 and  
April 1 to May 15  
Winter hours (Dec. 1 to March 31): 8 AM to 5 PM Monday -  
Friday; 9 AM to 4 PM Sat. and Sun.

Staffing - 3 PAOT in peak season (2 in evenings) = 6 FTE  
(State only pays 2); 1 PAOT remainder of year = 1 to 1.5 FTE

### Budget

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Salary -- \$792/week in peak season (20 weeks) | \$15,900  |
| \$160/week in off-season (32 weeks)            | \$5,200   |
| <br>   |           |
| Literature and Supplies                        | \$59,900  |
| Training                                       | \$ 2,000  |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities     | \$42,000  |
| <br>   |           |
| Total  | \$125,000 |



## Highway 2 East

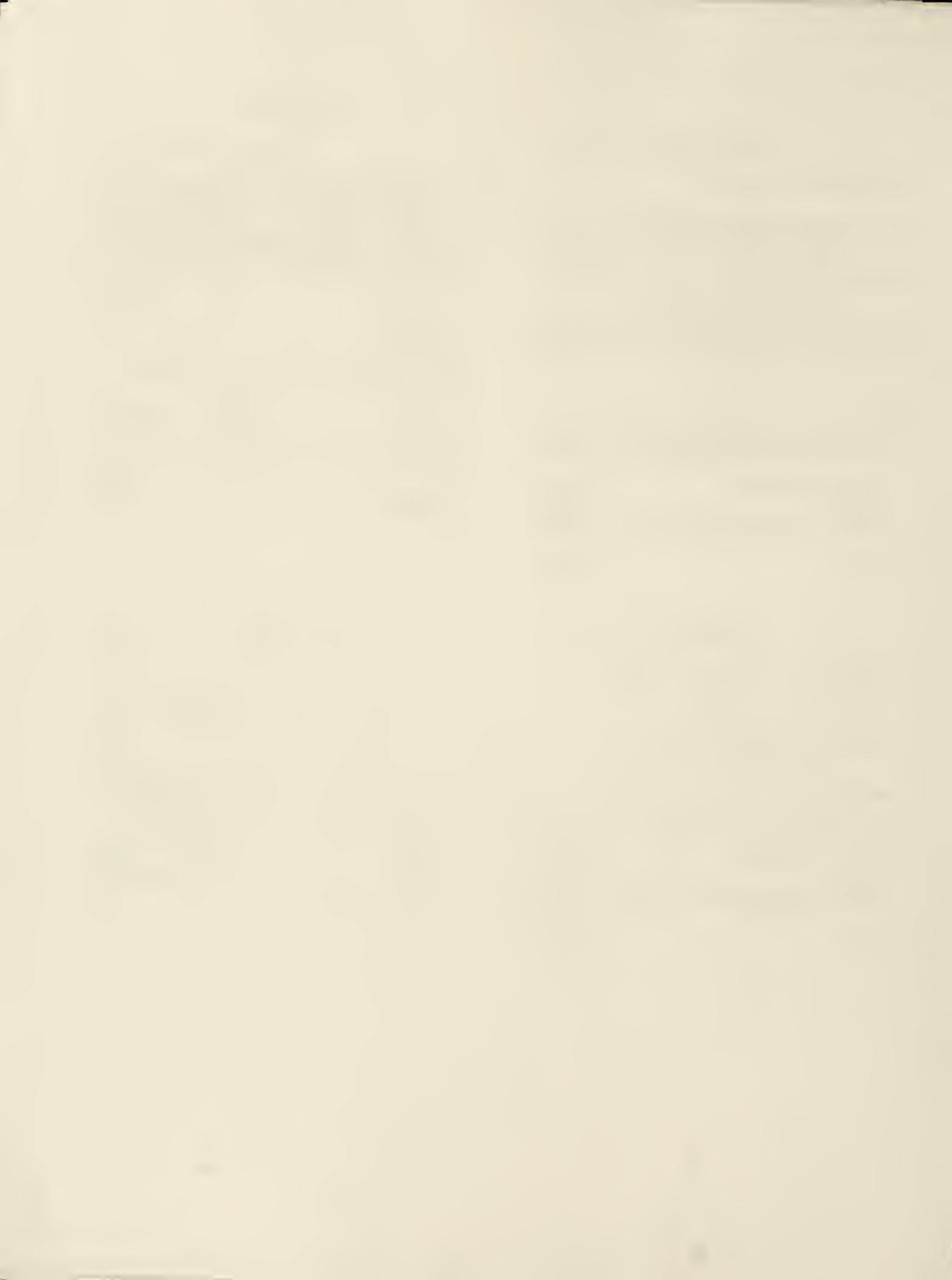
Suggested Season -- April through October

Hours -- 8 AM to 5 PM

Staffing - 1 FTE for 32 weeks

### Budget

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Salary -- \$396/week (32 weeks)            | \$12,700 |
| <br>                                       |          |
| Literature and Supplies                    | \$16,300 |
| Training                                   | \$ 500   |
| Building and Grounds Maintenance/Utilities | \$ 2,500 |
| <br>                                       |          |
| Total                                      | \$32,000 |



## Appendix D

### Entrance and Site Selection Process

#### **Entrance Location Criteria**

In order to assess the many potential VIC locations objectively, the technical steering committee developed the following criteria to rate VIC locations. These ratings were based on information collected through community contacts, mail surveys and existing data; they were used to narrow the number of locations to be considered. Final selections were based on on-site inspections by a panel of technical steering committee members.

(1) *Non-resident traffic volume* – total annual number of non-resident groups entering through a particular point. Since one goal of a VIC is to contact the greatest number of out-of-state visitors as possible, it is desirable to locate VIC's in locations where non-resident traffic volume is highest. Non-resident traffic volume figures used in this process were determined using the best available knowledge at the time, which included 1988/89 traffic figures from the Department of Highways and 1988 non-resident traffic proportions collected by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research.

Rating Scale: greater than 200,000 groups per year = 4  
160,000 to 200,000 groups = 3  
140,000 to 159,000 groups = 2  
100,000 to 139,000 groups = 1  
less than 100,000 groups = 0

(2) *Proximity to state boundary* – Will the VIC intercept travelers before they begin to disperse across the state? Providing information to visitors as soon as possible after they cross the border into Montana is advantageous, therefore locating the VIC's near the state line is desired.

Rating Scale: if no primary turn-offs between state line and that particular town = 3  
If a turn-off exists:  
1 to 16 miles from state line = 3  
17 to 35 miles = 2  
35 to 65 miles = 1  
more than 65 miles = 0

(3) *Commitment to volunteer staffing* – is there enough interest from communities and/or other agencies to staff the center if volunteers are needed for operation? One method other states have used to keep operating costs of VIC's low is to staff them with volunteers, often senior citizens. An attempt was made to assess the potential for towns and agencies to provide volunteers to staff the center.

Rating Scale: Probable commitment = 2  
Possible commitment = 1  
No commitment = 0

(4) *Potential for joint funding* -- are there local, state, or federal agencies willing to share the cost of constructing and/or operating the center? Some communities may have the potential to share the costs of a VIC; also, some locations may be of interest to state or federal land managing agencies in terms of sharing a Visitor Center.

Rating Scale: joint funding proposal is available = 3  
joint funding proposal is probable = 2  
joint funding proposal is possible = 1  
no joint funding proposal is available = 0

(5) *Will land and/or an existing structure (that meet the necessary specifications) be made available for the center by the community or by another local, state, or federal agency?* At some locations land owned by the community or by an agency may be available at no cost.

Rating Scale: land or existing structure is available = 3  
land or structure would probably be made available = 2  
land or structure might possibly be made available = 1  
land or structure would probably not be made available = 0

(6) *Does the amount of winter non-resident traffic justify keeping the center open year-round?* It would be desirable to be able to keep the center open year-round if the amount of traffic were heavy enough to justify it. (Ratings are based on traffic for the winter quarter, January through March.)

Rating Scale: greater than 15,000 groups in winter = 2  
8000 to 15,000 groups = 1  
less than 8000 groups = 0

(7) *Is there an existing or planned highway rest area at an appropriate location?* If a rest area is already in place or is planned for a particular location, the VIC could possibly be built in conjunction with that facility.

Rating Scale: existing rest area = 1  
planned or no rest area = 0

(8) *Community interest* - will the community support a VIC? For a Visitor Information Center to be successful, the community in which it is located must be supportive of the facility. Since this criterion is difficult to objectively and accurately measure, ratings will simply be plus, blank or minus.

Rating Scale: interest perceived to be very high = +  
interest perceived to be high = blank  
interest perceived to be moderately high = -

### ***Site Location Criteria***

Once the entrance to the state was identified, the following specific criteria were used to locate a potential tract of land for the center.

- 1) *availability of land* - is land available in a suitable location? would the land need to be purchased?
- 2) *size of site* - is the site large enough to hold the building, parking, and other functions?
- 3) *site topography* - does the site lend itself to construction of a center, with parking and picnic area?
- 4) *availability of utilities* - how easily can water, sewage and electricity be provided?
- 5) *ease of highway access* - is the site adjacent to or near the highway?
- 6) *ease of access by travelers* - will travelers be able to easily find the center?
- 7) *safety and security considerations* - would the site be secure when the center is closed?
- 8) *aesthetics and scenic views* - is the site an aesthetically pleasing location?

### ***Entrance Evaluations***

The initial evaluation process involved the Steering Committee identifying potential entrances, an initial questionnaire sent to each community, and further evaluation by the Committee. In a number of cases questionnaires mailed to communities were not returned; therefore, information is not complete for all entrances.

### **Haugan - I-90 West**

Haugan is a small community located along I-90 and the St.Regis river 16 miles east of the Idaho state line. About 200 yards from the Interstate is an existing U.S. Forest Service facility known as the Savenac tree nursery. Many of the buildings, although in good shape, are no longer used by the Forest Service. A VIC could be incorporated into this facility. Interest in a jointly operated VIC at the Savenac site has been expressed by the Forest Service.

Visitors entering the state at this point are often passing through the state (56%), and are on vacation (48%) and/or visiting family or friends (26%). About 9 percent are on business or attending a convention, while about 11 percent of vacationers are here to attend a special event. The typical length of stay is 1 to 2 nights. Many visitors come from Washington (37%), and also California (8%) and Idaho (5%).

| Criteria                                  | Status            | Rating    |
|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Year-round<br>Non-resident traffic volume | 399,000<br>groups | 4         |
| Proximity to state boundary               | 16 miles          | 3         |
| Volunteers to staff center                | probable          | 2         |
| Potential for joint funding               | definite          | 3         |
| Land or structure available               | definite          | 3         |
| Winter non-resident traffic volume        | 31,000<br>groups  | 2         |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area       | proposed          | 0         |
| Community interest and support            | unknown           |           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              |                   | <b>17</b> |

### St. Regis - I-90 West

St. Regis is a small community located at the junction of I-90 and Highway 135 on the St. Regis river 34 miles east of the Idaho state line. Highway 135 winds along the Clark Fork river, and is the first turn-off from I-90 to Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park. (See discussion about Haugan.)

| Criteria                            | Status                           | Rating |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 399,000 groups                   | 4      |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 34 miles<br>no primary turn-offs | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center          | possible                         | 1      |
| Potential for joint funding         | unknown                          | 0      |
| Land or structure available         | too small                        | 0      |
| Winter non-resident traffic volume  | 31,000 groups                    | 2      |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none                             | 0      |
| Community interest and support      | high                             |        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |                                  | 10+    |

no primary turn-offs

|                                     |               |     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----|
| Volunteers to staff center          | probable      | 2   |
| Potential for joint funding         | definite      | 3   |
| Land or structure available         | definite      | 3   |
| Winter non-resident traffic volume  | 18,000 groups | 2   |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none          | 0   |
| Community interest and support      | very high     | +   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |               | 16+ |

### Sweetgrass - I-15 North

Sweetgrass is a small community located immediately south of the Alberta line on I-15. A U.S. Customs station is located at the border crossing, and a small highway rest area is located nearby. I-15 is the major entry point into Montana from Canada.

Most visitors entering the state at this point are on vacation (58%), although 43 percent are passing through. Only about 9 percent are visiting family or friends, while only about 3 percent are on business or attending a convention. About 15 percent of vacationers are here to attend a special event. The typical length of stay is 1 to 2 nights, and most visitors come from either Alberta (62%) or Ontario (6%).

### Hardin - I-90 East

Hardin is a community of about 3200 people located about 58 miles north of the Wyoming state line and about 39 miles south of Billings along I-90. The Bighorn County Historical Museum is located in Hardin. Bighorn County is willing to donate five acres of land near the Museum for construction of a V.I.C. Staffing of the V.I.C. could be accomplished jointly with the Museum.

Visitors entering the state at this point are most often on vacation (54%), although 39 percent are passing through. About 32 percent are also visiting family or friends, and about 14 percent are on business or attending a convention. About 15 percent of vacationers are here to fish, while 20 percent are here to attend a special event. The typical length of stay is about 2 nights, and visitors tend to come from Washington (12%), Colorado (11%), Michigan and Wyoming (7% each).

| Criteria                    | Status         | Rating |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume | 165,000 groups | 3      |
| Proximity to state boundary | 58 miles       | 3      |

| Criteria                            | Status               | Rating |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 162,000 groups       | 3      |
| Proximity to state boundary         | adjacent to boundary | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center          | improbable           | 0      |
| Potential for joint funding         | unknown              | 0      |
| Land or structure available         | definite             | 3      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 16,000 groups        | 2      |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | rest area present    | 1      |
| Community interest and support      | unknown              |        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |                      | 12     |

### Shelby - I-15 North

Shelby is a community of about 3100 people located 35 miles south of the Alberta line at the junction of I-15 and Highway 2. It is the first relatively large town encountered by people traveling south on I-15 from Canada. (See previous page for profile of visitors).

|  |           |     |
|--|-----------|-----|
| Existing or proposed highway rest area | none      | 0   |
| Community interest and support         | very high | +   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |           | 11+ |

| Criteria                               | Status         | Rating |
|--|----------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume            | 162,000 groups | 3      |
| Proximity to state boundary            | 35 miles       | 2      |
| Volunteers to staff center             | possible       | 1      |
| Potential for joint funding            | possible       | 1      |
| Land or structure available            | definite       | 3      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 16,000 groups  | 2      |
| Existing or proposed highway rest area | none           | 0      |
| Community interest and support         | high           |        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |                | 12     |

### Wibaux - I-94 East

Wibaux is a small community of about 800 people located 9 miles west of the North Dakota line on I-94. Wibaux now operates a visitor center each summer, using one paid staffer and a number of senior citizen volunteers.

Most visitors entering the state at this point are passing through (62%), and 52 percent are on vacation. About 28 percent are visiting family or friends, and 5 percent are on business or attending a convention. The typical length of stay is 1 to 2 nights, and visitors tend to come from Minnesota (17%), California (12%), Washington (9%), North Dakota and Wisconsin (8% each).

| Criteria                         | Status         | Rating |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume      | 130,000 groups | 1      |
| Proximity to state boundary      | 9 miles        | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center       | probable       | 2      |
| Potential for joint funding      | possible       | 1      |
| Land or structure available      | definite       | 3      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol. | 9000 groups    | 1      |

### Glendive - I-94 East

Glendive is a community of about 6000 people located about 35 miles east of the North Dakota line at the junction of I-94 and Highway 16. It is the first large town encountered by people traveling west on I-94 from North Dakota. Makoshika State Park is located about 3 miles southeast of Glendive. (See Wibaux discussion).

| Criteria                                  | Status         | Rating |
|---|----------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume (I-94+Hwy 16) | 150,000 groups | 2      |
| Proximity to state boundary               | 35 miles       | 2      |
| Volunteers to staff center                | probable       | 2      |
| Potential for joint funding               | possible       | 1      |
| Land or structure available               | definite       | 3      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.          | 12,500 groups  | 1      |
| Existing or proposed highway rest area    | none           | 0      |
| Community interest and support            | very high      | +      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              |                | 11+    |

### Miles City - I-94 East

Miles City is a community of about 9600 people located about 105 miles west of the North Dakota line at the junction of I-94 and Highway 12.

| Criteria                            | Status         | Rating |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 150,000 groups | 2      |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 105 miles      | 0      |
| Volunteers to staff center          | probable       | 2      |
| Potential for joint funding         | unknown        | 0      |
| Land or structure available         | possible       | 1      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 12,500 groups  | 1      |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none           | 0      |
| Community interest and support      |                |        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |                | 6      |

| Criteria                            | Status         | Rating |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 154,000 groups | 2      |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 3 miles        | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center          | definite       | 2      |
| Potential for joint funding         | definite       | 3      |
| Land or structure available         | definite       | 3      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 8,000 groups   | 1      |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none           | 0      |
| Community interest and support      | very high      | +      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |                | 14+    |

### West Yellowstone - Highway 287

West Yellowstone is a small, tourism-oriented community of about 700 people located at the west boundary of Yellowstone National Park. The local Chamber of Commerce currently operates a small visitor information center in town, though it is widely recognized that a larger facility is needed. The nearest National Park Service visitor center is 30 miles into Yellowstone Park at Old Faithful. The nearest U.S. Forest Service visitor center is about 28 miles away at Quake Lake. Neither of these visitor centers interprets the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and neither provides much information on additional recreational opportunities in the ecosystem or in Montana as a whole. Much opportunity exists in West Yellowstone for a joint venture with the town, the Chamber of Commerce, the Forest Service and the Park Service. A parcel of land has already been made available for a visitor center, and a great deal of coordination between the different entities involved has already taken place.

Most visitors entering the state at this point are on vacation (77%) and/or visiting family or friends (30%). Only about 21 percent are passing through, and about 7 percent are on business or attending a convention. Almost one-third of vacationers are here to fish, while 15 percent are here to attend a special event. The typical length of stay is 2 to 3 nights, and most visitors tend to come from California (23%), Utah and Idaho (9% each), and Washington (7%).

### Gardiner - Highway 89 South

Gardiner is a small community located just north of the boundary of Yellowstone National Park on Highway 89. Gardiner is about 5 miles north of Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone.

| Criteria                            | Status        | Rating |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 94,000 groups | 0      |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 3 miles       | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center          | probable      | 2      |
| Potential for joint funding         | possible      | 1      |
| Land or structure available         | probable      | 2      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 8,000 groups  | 1      |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none          | 0      |
| Community interest and support      | high          |        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |               | 9      |

### Dillon - I-15 South

Dillon is a community of about 4000 people located 64 miles north of the Idaho line on I-15. I-15 is the major entry point into Montana from southern Idaho, Utah, and the southwest U.S. Dillon is the largest town in the Beaverhead/Bighole area of southwest Montana, an area with tremendous outdoor recreation potential. Opportunity exists for joint operation of a V.I.C. in Dillon with the U.S. Forest Service and Western Montana College.

Most visitors entering the state at this point are on vacation (57%), although many visitors (48%) are passing through. About 28 percent are visiting family or friends, and about 8 percent are on business or attending a convention. About one in ten vacationers is here to fish, while about 12 percent are here to attend a special event. The typical length of stay is 1 night, and most visitors come from either California (24%), Utah (14%), Idaho or Washington (12% each).

| Criteria                               | Status                            | Rating |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume            | 120,000 groups                    | 1      |
| Proximity to state boundary            | 64 miles<br>no major<br>turn-offs | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center             | probable                          | 2      |
| Potential for joint funding            | probable                          | 2      |
| Land or structure available            | probable                          | 2      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 8,500 groups                      | 1      |
| Existing/proposed highway<br>rest area | none                              | 0      |
| Community interest and support         | very high                         | +      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |                                   | 11+    |

### Bridger - Highway 310/72

Bridger is a small community located 21 miles north of the Wyoming line southwest of Billings. A large proportion of non-resident traffic passing through Bridger consists of Wyoming residents traveling to Billings.

| Criteria                    | Status                           | Rating |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume | 86,000 groups                    | 0      |
| Proximity to state boundary | 21 miles<br>no primary turn-offs | 3      |

|  |               |   |
|--|---------------|---|
| Volunteers to staff center             | unknown       | 0 |
| Potential for joint funding            | unknown       | 0 |
| Land or structure available            | unknown       | 0 |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 7,000 groups  | 0 |
| Existing/proposed highway<br>rest area | north of town | 1 |
| Community interest and support         | unknown       |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |               | 4 |

### Troy - Highway 2 West

Troy is a community of about 1100 people located about 15 miles east of the Idaho line on Highway 2 in northwest Montana.

| Criteria                               | Status                          | Rating |
|--|---------------------------------|--------|
| Non-resident traffic volume            | 85,000 groups                   | 0      |
| Proximity to state boundary            | 15 miles<br>no primary turn-off | 3      |
| Volunteers to staff center             | possible                        | 1      |
| Potential for joint funding            | possible                        | 1      |
| Land or structure available            | probable                        | 2      |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 6,300 groups                    | 0      |
| Existing/proposed highway<br>rest area | proposed                        | 0      |
| Community interest and support         | high                            |        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |                                 | 7      |

### St. Mary - Highway 89 North

St. Mary is a small tourism-oriented community located 19 miles south of Canada on Highway 89. St. Mary is located at one of the two major entrances to Glacier National Park. Travel Alberta has indicated some interest in a possible joint V.I.C. in St. Mary.

| Criteria                               | Status                           | Rating   |
|--|----------------------------------|----------|
| Non-resident traffic volume            | 76,000 groups                    | 0        |
| Proximity to state boundary            | 19 miles<br>no primary turn-offs | 3        |
| Volunteers to staff center             | unknown                          | 0        |
| Potential for joint funding            | possibly w/<br>Travel Alberta    | 1        |
| Land or structure available            | unknown                          | 0        |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 2,300 groups                     | 0        |
| Existing/proposed highway<br>rest area | none                             | 0        |
| Community interest and support         | unknown                          |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |                                  | <b>4</b> |

### Babb - Highway 89 North

Babb is a small community located 10 miles south of Canada on Highway 89. Babb is just east of the entrance to the Many Glacier valley of Glacier National Park.

| Criteria                               | Status                           | Rating   |
|--|----------------------------------|----------|
| Non-resident traffic volume            | 76,000 groups                    | 0        |
| Proximity to state boundary            | 10 miles<br>no primary turn-offs | 3        |
| Volunteers to staff center             | unknown                          | 0        |
| Potential for joint funding            | unknown                          | 0        |
| Land or structure available            | unknown                          | 0        |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 2,300 groups                     | 0        |
| Existing/proposed highway<br>rest area | none                             | 0        |
| Community interest and support         | unknown                          |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |                                  | <b>3</b> |

### Lolo - Highway 12 West

Lolo is a small community located about 33 miles east of the Idaho line at the junction of Highways 12 and 93, and about 8 miles south of Missoula. A GVW Weigh station is located 3 miles north of Lolo on Highway 93. The U.S. Forest Service maintains a visitor center at Lolo Pass on Highway 12.

| Criteria                               | Status                           | Rating   |
|--|----------------------------------|----------|
| Non-resident traffic volume            | 44,000 groups                    | 0        |
| Proximity to state boundary            | 33 miles<br>no primary turn-offs | 3        |
| Volunteers to staff center             | unknown                          | 0        |
| Potential for joint funding            | unknown                          | 0        |
| Land or structure available            | unknown                          | 0        |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.       | 4,500 groups                     | 0        |
| Existing/proposed highway<br>rest area | none                             | 0        |
| Community interest and support         | unknown                          |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                           |                                  | <b>3</b> |

### Fairview - Highway 200 East

Fairview is a community of about 1400 people located about 3 miles west of the North Dakota line on Highway 200.

| Criteria                            | Status        | Rating   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 45,000 groups | 0        |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 3 miles       | 3        |
| Volunteers to staff center          | unknown       | 0        |
| Potential for joint funding         | unknown       | 0        |
| Land or structure available         | unknown       | 0        |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 4,300 groups  | 0        |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none          | 0        |
| Community interest and support      | unknown       |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |               | <b>3</b> |

### Bainville - Highway 2 East

Bainville is a small community located 8 miles west of the North Dakota line on Highway 2. Highway 2 is a major route for travelers crossing northern Montana to Glacier Park.

| Criteria                            | Status        | Rating   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 37,000 groups | 0        |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 8 miles       | 3        |
| Volunteers to staff center          | unknown       | 0        |
| Potential for joint funding         | unknown       | 0        |
| Land or structure available         | unknown       | 0        |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 3,200 groups  | 0        |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | proposed      | 0        |
| Community interest and support      | unknown       |          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |               | <b>3</b> |

### Sidney - Highway 200 East

Sidney is a community of about 5700 people located 8 miles west of the North Dakota line at the junction of Highways 200 and 16.

| Criteria                            | Status        | Rating    |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 12,000 groups | 0         |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 8 miles       | 3         |
| Volunteers to staff center          | possible      | 1         |
| Potential for joint funding         | unlikely      | 0         |
| Land or structure available         | possible      | 1         |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 1,000 groups  | 0         |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none          | 0         |
| Community interest and support      | very high     | +         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |               | <b>5+</b> |

### Culbertson - Highway 2 East

Culbertson is a community of about 850 people located 23 miles west of the North Dakota line at the junction of Highways 2 and 16 (coming down from Canada).

| Criteria                            | Status                           | Rating     |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| Non-resident traffic volume         | 37,000 groups                    | 0          |
| Proximity to state boundary         | 23 miles<br>no primary turn-offs | 3          |
| Volunteers to staff center          | probable                         | 2          |
| Potential for joint funding         | probable                         | 2          |
| Land or structure available         | definite                         | 3          |
| Winter non-resident traffic vol.    | 3,200 groups                     | 0          |
| Existing/proposed highway rest area | none                             | 0          |
| Community interest and support      | very high                        | +          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |                                  | <b>10+</b> |

## Appendix E

### Community Involvement

A detailed survey regarding potential community involvement in the development and operation of Visitor Information Centers was sent to each of the seven participating communities (the U.S. Forest Service in the case of Haugan.) A copy of that survey is included in this Appendix. Each community's responses to the survey are summarized as follows. Letters of Intent were collected from each community to formalize their various commitments; these are also included.

*Shelby:* Land would be made available under a long-term lease. The lease would be in the amount of \$201/year; the Shelby Chamber of Commerce would pay \$200/year, leaving the state to pay only \$1/year. The city and or county would assist with site preparation, water hookup and landscaping. The Chamber of Commerce would provide any supplemental volunteer staffing as needed.

*Wibaux:* Land would be donated free of charge to the state. The city and/or county would assist with site preparation, water and sewer hookups, and landscaping. The Chamber of Commerce would provide some volunteer staffing and light maintenance work.

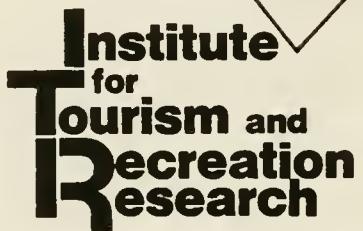
*West Yellowstone:* Land will be made available; details are not yet finalized. The Chamber of Commerce would provide light maintenance.

*Dillon:* Land would be made available; specific site location is not yet finalized. The U.S. Forest Service would assist with interpretive displays, visitor information, and some staffing. Western Montana College would provide some student staffing and assist with computer operations. Local civic organizations would assist with landscaping.

*Hardin:* Land would be donated to the state free of charge. Big Horn county would assist with site preparation. Big Horn County Historical Museum would provide some supplemental volunteer staffing as needed.

*Haugan:* The U.S. Forest Service would provide land and buildings under a special use permit. They may be able to provide some capital investment money for building renovation and/or road work. The Forest Service would provide site maintenance, and coordinate some volunteer staffing as needed.

*Culbertson:* Space will be made available in the lobby area of their museum. The Museum will be responsible for administration, as well as maintenance and utilities.



Science Complex 428, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana 59812 (406) 243-5406

November 7, 1989

Chamber of Commerce  
St. Regis, MT 59866

Good Day:

As you may be aware, the 1989 Montana Legislature passed HB 550, which mandated a feasibility study of Visitor Information Centers for Montana. HB 550 requires that a plan be submitted to the 1991 Legislature. The plan should detail recommended locations, costs, operating procedures, and designs. The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, in conjunction with Travel Montana, is now initiating this study.

One of the primary components of the study is to identify the six most effective and beneficial locations for these Visitor Information Centers. We are currently developing criteria to help guide selection of the six locations, and would like to collect information from a number of communities concerning their perceptions about locational criteria and local support for a Center.

Would you please take a few minutes to answer the questions on the attached page and return it to the Institute in the enclosed envelope? Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Stephen F. McCool  
Director

**NOTE: This initial survey was sent to approximately 20 communities which were chosen by the Steering Committee for further consideration.**

1. What criteria would you suggest to use in evaluating the various highway entrances into Montana for their suitability for a Visitor Information Center?

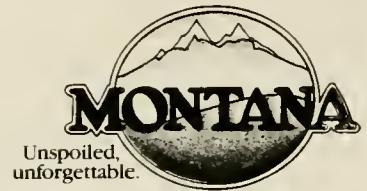
2. Could you please summarize what you feel is the level of community interest and support in a Visitor Information Center in or near your community? What are some indicators of this interest and support?

3. What is the population of your community? Do you feel your community has a large enough population base to staff a Visitor Information Center? What is the potential for staffing such a Center with volunteers from your community?

4. What is the potential for your community making land available for a Center? What is the potential for your community helping to jointly fund construction and/or operation of such a Center?

Travel Montana • Department of Commerce • Helena, MT 59620  
Phone (406) 444-2654 • FAX (406) 444-2808

In Tokyo: Phone (03) 234-8383 • FAX (03) 239-3300



June 29, 1990

Donna Madsen  
West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 458  
West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Dear Donna:

The Department of Commerce is moving ahead on the development of the Visitor Information Center proposal mandated by the 1989 Legislature in HB550. As you are aware, a number of sites around the state have been selected for proposed VIC's. A site in or near your community is one of those selected.

The next phase of the project requires the Department of Commerce to draft a specific proposal for the 1991 Legislature, outlining exactly what the Visitor Information Center system would entail, how it would be funded and how each of the centers would be managed and operated.

As was discussed at each of the selected communities during the site inspection, it is expected that the local communities would contribute in varying degrees to the Visitor Information Centers. The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research has already solicited some information from the communities, and that information has been helpful in formulating a general idea of what the communities will be able to do.

However, in order to prepare a proposal to the Legislature, it is necessary for us to gather specifics on what each community will be able to contribute to the construction, administration, management, and/or operation of the Visitor Information Center.



Page 2  
Donna Madsen  
June 29, 1990

To that end, I ask that you please complete and return the attached response form by **July 16**.

I realize that gathering the information we are requesting will require a great amount of time and effort on your part, and I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

sincerely,

Sandra Guedes  
Travel Director

SG/bt  
Enc./VIC Response Form

cc: Steve McCool, Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research  
Larry McRae, Chair, Tourism Advisory Council  
VIC Steering Committee Members

**NOTE: This follow-up survey was sent to the seven communities chosen by the Steering Committee to be the proposed sites.**

June 26, 1990

**VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER**

**Final Community Survey**

- 1) The property that has been selected as the site for the Visitor Information Center will be  
 donated  
 leased at annual fee of \_\_\_\_\_  
 sold to the state at purchase price of \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Please describe whatever assistance your community will be able to provide in the construction of the Visitor Information Center facility?
  - a)  site preparation (leveling, etc. if needed)  
Who will perform this work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b)  connect utilities       water  
                                     sewer  
                                     electricity  
                                     phone  
Who will preform this work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c)  landscaping

Who will perform this work? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

d)  provide labor for construction

provide materials for construction

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who will perform this work? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) Will your community be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Visitor Information Center?

Yes  No

Who will be responsible for this function? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4)  Yes, our community will provide volunteer staffing of \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week.

No, our community is not planning to provide any volunteer staffing.

Comments: (Please clarify all plans of providing volunteer staff, i.e. number of persons, number of hours to be worked and any seasonality implications).

5) Will your community be responsible for maintenance work of the Visitor Information Center facility?

Yes  No

If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Who will perform this work? \_\_\_\_\_

6) Will your community be responsible for covering the cost of utilities at the Visitor Information Center?

Yes  No

If yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

7) Would your chamber of commerce or city government want to rent office space (if available) at the Visitor Information Center building?

If so, please describe purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

Total square footage needed? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of offices and approximate sizes of each? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

8) Please briefly outline any other pertinent financing options, development concepts or local support that may encourage the opening of a Visitor Information Center in your community.

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Site/Location: \_\_\_\_\_

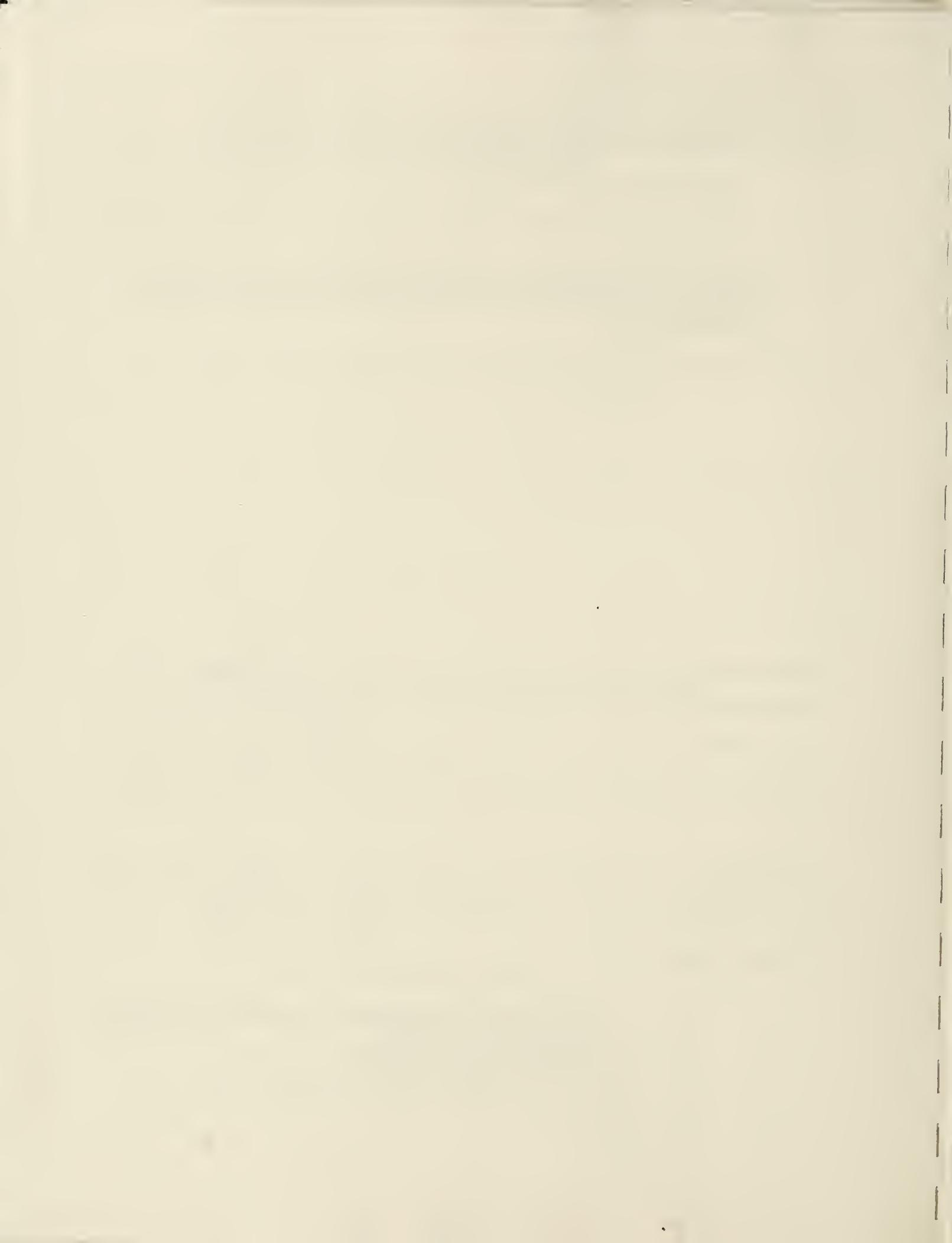
Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return by July 16 to:**

Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research  
ATTN: Steve McCool  
University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812



LETTER OF INTENT

This letter of Intent will highlight and summarize the understanding presently shared between the Steering Committee for the Proposed Visitor Information Center and Beaverhead County.

It is the present understanding that land in close proximity to the South Interchange, Exit #62 of I-15, owned by John Erb would be available through possible land transfers.

An alternate site at the junction of I-15 and Hwy 278 owned by Tash T. Diamond Livestock, Inc. is also available through the same land transfer process.

The referred to land transfer would be under the Guidelines of the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and State Land Acquisition Program. It will provide the owner of the site selected to be compensated with land of comparable and acceptable value to that provided site.

This letter of intent will be included as an exhibit in the project proposal to be submitted to the Legislative subcommittee as mandated by the 51st Legislature. If the 52nd Legislature gives funding authority to this Visitor Information Center project, final negotiations will begin, using the information in this letter to conclude a lease agreement between the State and Beaverhead County.

David R. Whalen  
David R. Whalen, President, Beaverhead  
Chamber of Commerce

11-7-90  
Date

Any Other Appropriate Signatures

N/R  
Signature

N/R  
Signature

LETTER OF INTENT

October 5, 1990

The Honorable Larry Bonderud  
P.O. Box 743  
Shelby, MT 59474

Dear Mayor Bonderud:

This Letter of Intent will highlight and summarize the understanding presently shared between the Steering Committee for the Proposed Visitor Information Center and Toole County.

It is the understanding that a parcel of land owned by Toole County, located adjacent to Interstate 15 will be made available for use as a new Visitor Information Center. This parcel of land of approximately 2 acres near the northern Shelby interstate interchange (between I-15 and the frontage road) would be leased for 20 years for \$201.00 per year. The Shelby Chamber of Commerce would pay \$200 per year of this lease and the State would pay \$1.00 per year. After the initial 20-year lease period, a new lease would be renewed at ten year intervals. The Shelby Chamber of Commerce and the State would share in the staffing and operational expenses.

This Letter of Intent will be included as an exhibit in the project proposal to be submitted to the Legislative subcommittee as mandated by the 51st Legislature. If the 52nd Legislature gives funding authority to this Visitor Information Center project, final negotiations will begin, using the information in this letter to conclude a lease agreement between the State and Toole County.

*Larry J. Bonderud*

Larry Bonderud, Mayor, Shelby

*10-10-90*

Date

Any Other Appropriate Signatures

*Harry Simons*

Harry Simons, Chairman  
Toole County Commissioner

*10/15/90*

Date

*Sandi Peers*

Sandi Peers, President  
Shelby Area Chamber of Commerce

*10/15/90*

Date

Signature

Date

LETTER OF INTENT

October 9, 1990

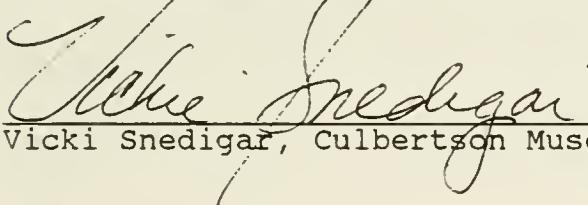
Mrs. Vicki Snedigar  
Culbertson Museum Club  
P.O. Box 95  
Culbertson, MT 59218

Dear Ms. Snedigar:

This Letter of Intent will highlight and summarize the understanding presently shared between the Steering Committee for the Proposed Visitor Information Center and the Culbertson Museum Club.

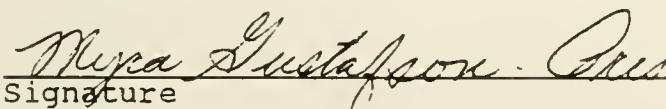
It is the present understanding that the Culbertson Museum Club would lease an appropriate amount of space within the new Culbertson Museum for use as a Visitor Information Center. The Museum and the State would share in staffing and operational expenses.

This Letter of Intent will be included as an exhibit in the project proposal to be submitted to the Legislative subcommittee as mandated by the 51st Legislature. If the 52nd Legislature gives funding authority to this Visitor Information Center project, final negotiations will begin, using the information in this letter to conclude a lease agreement between the State and the Culbertson Museum Club.

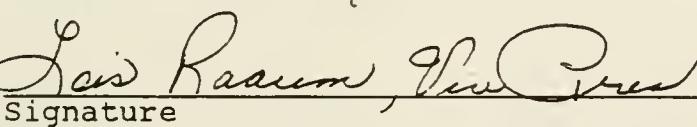
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Vicki Snedigar, Culbertson Museum Club

10-11-90  
Date

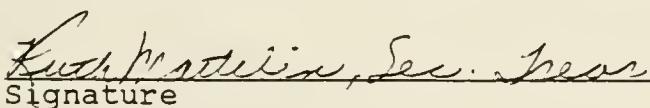
Any Other Appropriate Signatures

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

10/15/90  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

10/15/90  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

10/15/90  
Date

RECEIVED

LETTER OF INTENT

01 1990

October 9, 1990

WIBAUX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
DEPT. OF PT

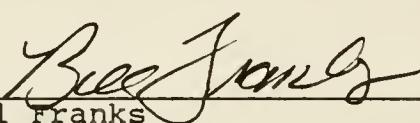
Mr. Bill Franks  
Wibaux Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 260  
Wibaux, MT 59353

Dear Mr. Franks:

This Letter of Intent will highlight and summarize the understanding presently shared between the Steering Committee for the Proposed Visitor Information Center and Jerome and Patricia Franks.

It is the understanding that a parcel of land owned by Jerome and Patricia Franks will be made available for use as a new Visitor Information Center near Wibaux, Montana. Ownership of this parcel of land, approximately 4 acres, adjacent to the East exit from I-94, will be transferred to the State of Montana solely for the use of a Visitor Information Center. Ownership of this parcel would transfer back to Jerome and Patricia Franks, if at such time, the parcel was not to be used as a Visitor Information Center. The State would pay the costs of surveying this parcel, necessary for the ownership transfer. The Wibaux Chamber of Commerce and the State would share in the staffing and operational expenses.

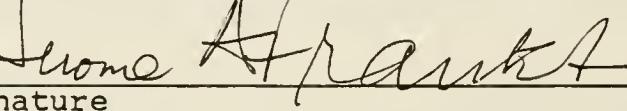
This Letter of Intent will be included as an exhibit in the project proposal to be submitted to the Legislative subcommittee as mandated by the 51st Legislature. If the 52nd Legislature gives funding authority to this Visitor Information Center project, final negotiations will begin, using the information in this letter to conclude an ~~executive~~ agreement between the State and Jerome and Patricia Franks.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Franks

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

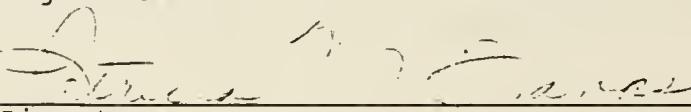
10-31-90

Any Other Appropriate Signatures

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

10-29-90

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

10-30-90

LETTER OF INTENT

October 10, 1990

Ms. Christine A. Cooke  
County Attorney  
Big Horn County  
Drawer H  
Hardin, MT 59034

Dear Ms. Cooke:

This Letter of Intent will highlight and summarize the understanding presently shared between the Steering Committee for the Proposed Visitor Information Center and Big Horn County.

It is the present understanding that a parcel of land owned by Big Horn County, adjacent to the Big Horn County Historical Museum, will be made available for use as a new Visitor Information Center. This parcel of land of approximately 2 acres near Interstate 90 will be deeded to the State of Montana at no cost, with the understanding that the proposed use is for the site of a State Visitor Information Center.

This Letter of Intent will be included as an exhibit in the project proposal to be submitted to the Legislature. If the 52nd Legislature gives funding authority to this Visitor Information Center project, final negotiations will begin, using the information in this letter to conclude a lease agreement between the State and Big Horn County.

Christine A. Cooke, Big Horn County Attorney

Date

Any other Appropriate Signatures

Alvin K. Sander  
Signature

15 Oct 90

Date

John Doyle  
Signature

10-15-90

Date

Signature

Date

LETTER OF INTENT

August 31, 1990

The Honorable Carolyn Janssen-Colman  
P.O. Box 459  
West Yellowstone, MT 59758

Dear Mayor Janssen-Colman:

This Letter of Intent will highlight and summarize the understanding presently shared between the Steering Committee for the Proposed Visitor Information Center and the Town of West Yellowstone.

It is the present understanding that a parcel of land owned by the Town of West Yellowstone will be made available for use as a new Visitor Information Center in West Yellowstone. This parcel of land will be either 1) a parcel adjacent to the West entrance into Yellowstone National Park consisting of approximately 3.45 acres or 2) a parcel in the center of town, now being utilized as a town park consisting of approximately 6.23 acres. The final location of the Proposed Visitor Information Center will be determined by the Town of West Yellowstone and the town also requests the opportunity to negotiate what area entities will be involved in the building.

This Letter of Intent will be included as an exhibit in the project proposal to be submitted to the Legislative subcommittee as mandated by the 51st Legislature. If the 52nd Legislature gives funding authority to the Visitor Information Center project, final negotiations will begin, using the information in this letter to conclude a lease agreement between the State and West Yellowstone.

Carolyn Janssen-Colman  
Carolyn Janssen-Colman, Mayor, West Yellowstone

09-13-90

Date

Bill Howell  
Bill Howell, Council President

9/13/1990

Steve Daniels  
Steve Daniels, Council Member

SEP. 13, 1990

Lynn Loucks  
Lynn Loucks, Council Member

Sept. 11, 1990

Jim Hobbs  
Jim Hobbs, Council Member

Sept. 11, 1990



United States Department of the Interior  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK  
WYOMING 82190

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
D62(YELL)

September 20, 1990

Mr. Charles Brooks  
Department of Commerce  
Capitol Station  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Brooks:

I am writing on behalf of Yellowstone National Park regarding the proposal for a cooperatively operated visitor center in West Yellowstone. The National Park Service is in full support of the concept and believes such a facility would provide numerous benefits to the traveling public as an information and orientation facility. This is particularly true since the closest National Park Service visitor center to West Yellowstone is 35 miles away at Old Faithful.

As you are no doubt aware, the Federal Government faces a period of severe fiscal austerity as it attempts to grapple with the budget deficit. The National Park Service is certain to face constraints on its ability to financially support any new programs in the future. We face difficulty right now in keeping up with our basic operations within the park. While it would be entirely appropriate for Yellowstone to assist with the operation of a cooperative visitor center, that decision is contingent on available funding and staffing levels within the park.

We applaud the efforts of the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce and others who would like to provide better service to our visitor population. All parties involved stand to benefit from such a joint project.

Sincerely,

  
Robert D. Barbee  
Superintendent



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Gallatin National Forest  
P.O. Box 130  
Bozeman, MT 59771

Reply to: 1560

Date: SEP 11 1980

West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce  
Lorraine Stoops, President  
West Yellowstone, Montana 59758

Dear Ms. Stoops:

I am responding to the presentation that the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce "Building Committee" made to the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee on August 13th, in Helena, Montana.

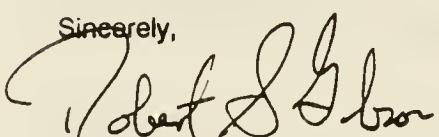
Your presentation was both informative and enlightening. We appreciate your organization taking the time and effort to attempt to coordinate a multi-agency visitor information center in West Yellowstone.

In speaking for the Forest Service, specifically those forests which are located in the State of Montana, I can assure you that we share your same interests in working towards keeping the traveling public better informed.

The multi-agency visitor center concept that you addressed in Helena represents precisely the type of partnership that we support and would like to become more involved with. Having said that, I must qualify the limit of our involvement. Because our budget process is directed by Congress and consequently not controlled at the local level, we cannot make long-term and out-year commitments. We can, however, give support to the concept, assist in searching out other funding sources and perhaps help with some staffing of the information center on a year by year basis as funds become available. It would be our hope that as interest and support for this facility grow, so would the involvement of the federal agencies.

Again, thank you for involving us in your planning efforts. Please keep us informed as you move ahead with this project.

Sincerely,

  
ROBERT S. GIBSON

Forest Supervisor

cc: Hebgen Lake R.D.



PRELIMINARY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE  
FOREST SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND  
THE MONTANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

SAVENAC WELCOME CENTER

This Memorandum of Understanding, is made and entered into this 25<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1990 by and between the Montana State Department of Commerce, hereinafter called the State, and the Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, through the Lolo National Forest, hereinafter called the Forest Service.

WHEREAS, Forest Service administers National Forest System lands which include the Savenac Administrative/Work Site on the Superior Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest and,

WHEREAS, the State, in cooperation with other groups, is interested in creating a Visitor Information and Welcome Center for the State of Montana and,

WHEREAS, it is mutually beneficial for both the State and the Forest Service to work together to make Visitor Information and Recreation Opportunities/Information available to the public and,

WHEREAS, the Forest Service, is willing to consider authorizing the State to use National Forest System land and certain identified structures at the Savenac Tree Nursery located in Section 22, T.19 N., R. 30 W., P.M., for the purpose of operating a "State Visitor Welcome Center". In anticipation of a proposal by the State, the Forest Service would consider making available a portion of the site, open spaces, buildings, and foot bridges for the operation of the Center.

NOW THEREFORE, the Forest Service, and the State, would agree to consider the following if the State does elect to approve and fund the Visitor Center concept:

1. The Forest Service would, after receipt of application from the State, initiate a formal "Special Use Permit" process that would set the stage for the use of a portion of the nursery site by the State. Principally three existing structures, the Administration Building (#2012), the West House (#1016), and the East House (#1020) would be reviewed for permit. At the same time a federal "Future Use Determination" would be issued that would review the desirability of joint use of the site. The Federal Government would retain interest and control over the land. Also, any construction plans associated with the construction of new structures or the adaptive use of existing structures will be considered for review and approval by the Forest Service, before construction or modification begins.

2. The State would coordinate and prepare any necessary Environmental Analysis Documents prior to the signing of any "Special Use Agreement".

3. Prior to undertaking actual construction work, the State would obtain review and approval by the Forest Supervisor of the proposed locations and plans for any road, parking lot, new building, utility, sewage system improvement, or other betterment to the site.

4. Utility payments for structures designed primarily for presenting the State Welcome message, or providing comfort to the travelers, site security, staff housing, waste water transport, or potable water pumping, would be the responsibility of the State. Utilities for the building that houses the Forest Service Interpretive materials would be paid by the Forest Service.

5. The Forest Service would sample and monitor the potable water supply monthly.

6. The State would pay for the annual maintenance of the buildings that are directly used for Visitor Information Activities. The exception to this would be the structure that would house the Forest Service Interpretive Materials. Maintenance would include painting of the interior and exterior, plumbing, heating, and ventilation system repair, and the like. Any major site maintenance projects will be mutually reviewed and agreed to in advance of performing the activity.

7. Grounds maintenance equipment including lawn mowers, trimmers, sprinkling systems, snow removal equipment, and saws would be funded on a 50/50 basis between the State and Forest Service. Daily site maintenance will be the responsibility of the State for those buildings and portions of the grounds associated with the on-going operation of the Visitor Center.

8. The season of operation will be determined by the State but initially would run from May 1st through the end of October. Security for the site during the off season will be the responsibility of the State.

9. The Center Director, whose salary, benefits, and leave will be paid by the State, would report to the State and coordinate with the Forest Service liaison. The Director would supervise the volunteer staff, maintenance workers, and security workers. Also the Center Director would schedule necessary maintenance work, schedule work hours, coordinate displays, and coordinate the overall operation of the Center.

10. The Volunteer work force would be recruited from the local area or by State or Region-wide announcements. Limited housing or access to trailer pads and utility hook-ups would be available on a restricted basis. This might include one apartment and three trailer pads. The Center Director would receive preference.

11. The Forest Service would be available to recruit for and assist with the training of a volunteer labor force to staff the Center. These employees will be under the overall supervision of the Center Director. Additional paid staff, as agreed to by the State and Forest Service shall be funded by the State.

12. The State will arrange for and provide necessary Interstate Highway and local directional signing for the Site.

13. Prior to signing any agreements the State and Forest Service would agree on a 5 year maintenance plan to cover the site and its improvements. Also, a 5 year agreement review schedule would be established. Under this arrangement, the final agreement would be subject to review every 5th year on or near the anniversary date of the signing of the original document.

14. The Forest Service would consider funding improvements to the West House (#1016) should this structure be devoted solely to presenting the Forest Service message and related National Forest Visitor Information programs.

THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE STATE WOULD DISCUSS AND RESOLVE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF ANY FORMAL DOCUMENTS:

1. That this agreement shall automatically terminate 60 days after receipt of written notice from either party. Upon termination of the agreement, the State may remove any structures that were constructed by the State subsequent to signing of the original agreement. Prior to the removal of any such improvements, removal plans will be submitted for review and approval of the Forest Supervisor so that damage to the underlying real property may be held to a minimum. The land and structures that existed before signing of the original agreement shall remain in Government ownership.

2. Any improvements constructed after the signing of the original agreement that were built for the purpose of operating the Visitor Center, including interpretive buildings, paved parking, restroom structures, security improvements, lighting, foot paths, sewage systems, and remodeled interior spaces shall revert to Federal Government ownership should the State elect not to remove them from the site.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

By Robert P. Nevebel  
Title Forest Supervisor - Lolo National Forest

STATE OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix F**

### **Visitor Information Center Construction Cost Estimates**

## Visitor Information Center System

### Construction Cost Estimates

#### Types of Costs

*Building and architectural fees* These figures include the cost of the building shell and interior walls, built-in fixtures, floors, walls, ceilings, lighting, toilets, cabinets, and the heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing and electrical systems. They also include estimates of the professional consulting fees for detailed design, construction documents and construction observation.

*Site Preparation* This includes the cost of modifying the site in preparation for construction of the buildings, access roadways, parking, and landscaping.

*Paving* Cost of gravel base course, asphalt paving and striping of access roads and parking areas on the site to Montana Department of Highways standards.

*Site Development* Cost of picnic shelters and tables, garbage cans, benches, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and signs.

*Landscaping* Cost of topsoil, seed and fertilizer, trees, shrubs and sprinkler system.

*Furnishings* These costs include free standing furniture (chairs, tables, lamps and desks) and office equipment (telephone, copiers, files and desktop computer).

*Montana Exhibit* Cost of cabinetry, relief map, video equipment and display systems.

*Regional Exhibit* Cost of display cabinets for a regionally developed and funded exhibit.

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER COST DETAIL

| Item                            | 190 West          | 190 East           | 194               | 115 North         | 115 South         | US 287 South        | US 2 East        |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Building and architectural fees | \$ 285,500        | \$ 816,200         | \$ 680,700        | \$ 706,200        | \$ 706,200        | \$ 1,017,700        | \$ 4,400         |
| Site Preparation                | 20,000            | 20,000             | 0                 | 8,000             | 8,000             | 20,000              | 0                |
| Paving                          | 84,600            | 44,400             | 29,500            | 40,600            | 26,400            | 76,400              | 0                |
| Site Development                | 39,900            | 41,900             | 47,200            | 61,100            | 69,000            | 91,300              | 0                |
| Landscaping                     | 4,700             | 74,100             | 15,600            | 29,100            | 31,400            | 14,800              | 0                |
| Furnishings                     | 21,300            | 23,300             | 24,000            | 20,000            | 20,000            | 72,000              | 10,000           |
| Montana Exhibit                 | 100,000           | 100,000            | 100,000           | 100,000           | 100,000           | 100,000             | 50,000           |
| Regional Exhibit                | 0                 | 12,000             | 8,000             | 10,000            | 10,000            | 23,000              | 14,000           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>\$ 529,000</b> | <b>\$1,131,900</b> | <b>\$ 905,000</b> | <b>\$ 975,000</b> | <b>\$ 971,000</b> | <b>\$ 1,415,200</b> | <b>\$ 78,400</b> |



## Appendix G

### Unsolicited Comments from Non-Resident Visitors

**Collected from Travel Surveys distributed by the Institute for  
Tourism and Recreation Research, 1988 - 1990**

We had difficulty finding a Visitor Center and getting information on campgrounds. There should be information centers near the highway when one enters the state so those pulling trailers don't have to go downtown in a congested area. There should be pull-offs so one can stop and relax a bit before going on. We found Montana strongly lacking in these amenities. A listing of all campgrounds handed out to trailers at a visitor center upon entering the state, as Canada does, would be most helpful to RV'ers.

In my several trips cross-country, Montana is the only state where I was unable to pick up an official state map at the initial rest area on an interstate highway.

We did not find even one Visitors Center or Information Center so we could obtain information on possible points of interest.

Have a large Visitors Center/Park information depot at each port of entry with informed students and literature available for tourists. Perhaps a large map with attractions and features of the state.

A suggestion -- an information unit at the first rest stop at each border with state maps and highlights of information to present to out-of-state travelers.

Visitor Information Centers should be at all main highways entering the state.

More Visitor Centers.

Place a Visitor Information Center at entry points into Montana (e.g. I-90)

Establish a comprehensive Visitor Center at major points of entry.

Locate a rest stop/Tourist Information Center within 2 miles of the Montana/Wyoming state line on I-90.

More rest areas and Information Centers.

More tourist facilities, improve visitor information.

More ionformation at rest areas about fishing and hunting opportunities within the area. I'd like to return to fish and hunt if I knew where to go!

The first place we look for as we cross a state border is a Visitors Center near the highway, easy to get to from the interstate. Inside the building we ask first for literature that lists all the art museums in your state and the addresses.

Tourist Information needed near border crossing.

Road maps and Visitor Information would be very helpful.

Need Information Centers at entrance points.

We found in Montana, as in the other states we passed through, that there were very few Tourist Information Centers with valuable information. We needed city maps and campground information but found none. The Tourist Information booths in B.C. and Alberta were extremely helpful. Check them out.

A Tourist Information Bureau when entering the state listing all historic sites, plus maps, etc. is needed.

There is no Tourist Information Center when entering on I-90 from Idaho and it would be an improvement to have one.

Keep on with your present program but open up some Visitor Centers.

More Information Centers.



## **Appendix H**

### **Letters of Support from Agency Partners**

# DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS



STAN STEPHENS, GOVERNOR

2701 PROSPECT AVE.

STATE OF MONTANA

HELENA, MONTANA 59620

December 14, 1990

Clint Blackwood  
Tourism Development Coordinator  
Department of Commerce  
Helena, MT 59620

Thank you for the opportunity to review the preliminary draft of the funding model for the proposed Visitor Information Centers.

We agree with the visitor information center concept, and the proposal to build seven of these facilities seems logical and has the support of the Montana Department of Highways. Additionally, should such a program be implemented by the legislature we see it as an opportunity for the department to close, over time, some highway rest area facilities since a fully functional visitor center would also provide this kind of service to the traveling public.

We did not budget funds for the construction and maintenance of the parking lots. However, if the program and overall funding package receive the support of the legislature, the MDOH would cooperate by providing the estimated \$300,000 for parking lot construction. This would however, require us to delay other projects in order to provide this funding.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Rothwell".

John Rothwell  
Director of Highways

SCK:D:PD:gh:234.by

cc: Keenan D. Bingham, Chief, Planning & Statistics Bureau  
Don W. Cromer, Supervisor, Rural Planning Section

**Montana Department  
of  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



1420 East Sixth Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620  
October 31, 1990

Steve McCool  
Institute for Tourism and  
Recreation Research  
Science Complex 428  
University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812

Dear Steve,

Just read your "Montana Visitor Information Center's Feasibility Study and Proposal." We couldn't agree more that visitor information centers have a significant potential to benefit the economy, both of local communities and our state. We've done some research on watchable wildlife potentials and our findings are consistent with yours. There's little question that people would be willing to spend more time in our state if we were better able to publicize recreational opportunities such as wildlife viewing.

Our inquiries indicate that wildlife viewing participation is growing at a faster rate than hunting and fishing. We also estimate that wildlife viewing contributes more than \$44 million annually to Montana's economy in trip-related expenditures; 70 percent of that revenue comes from nearly 300,000 people who visit Montana for the primary purpose of seeing wildlife.

In an effort to capitalize on this increasing interest, in conjunction with other private organizations and public agencies, we've produced a watchable wildlife viewing guide for Montana. That guide, which primarily targets nonresident visitors, lists over 100 sites where travelers can observe wildlife, how to get to those locations, etc.

Again, it looks to us like you are right on target. Keep us posted so we can help with this very worthwhile effort.

Sincerely,

Ron Aasheim, Administrator  
Conservation Education Division

cc: Clint Blackwood



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Region 1

Federal Building  
P.O. Box 7669  
Missoula, MT 59807

Reply to: 2390

Date: January 3, 1991

Chuck Brook  
Director  
Montana Department of Commerce  
1424 9th Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Mr. Brook:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the proposal for a State-wide system of Visitor Information Centers. The role that recreation and tourism play in Montana's economy, while significant today, will doubtless increase in importance as more and more Americans discover the abundance of scenic beauty and recreation opportunities in the State. National Forest System Lands will continue to provide many of the special settings that people seek for their leisure activities. We believe that the concept of a statewide system of Visitor Information Centers will provide the quality service to Montana's visitors that will result in extended stays and repeat visits. It will also help promote lesser known areas and attractions.

As State and Federal agencies work with the private sector to build a stronger recreation/tourism infrastructure, it makes excellent sense to pool our resources. The USDA Forest Service will continue to do what we do best -- provide natural resource based recreation opportunities. We recognize, however, that we have a role to play in promoting these opportunities. We strongly support the idea that the proposed Visitor Information Centers be developed and run by the State of Montana on a cooperative interagency basis. This seems a prudent and efficient way to meet public needs, and we are always interested in pursuing mutually beneficial partnerships that effectively serve the public.

In response to proposed multi-agency funding, we are convinced that the USDA Forest Service can play an appropriate role at several of the proposed centers. This role may include providing publications, displays, seasonal staffing and/or the use of land or structures. The proposals for West Yellowstone, Dillon, and Haugan are particularly significant because of their close proximity to National Forests. Unfortunately, realities of the Federal budgeting process prohibit us from committing funds beyond the current year.

We are pleased to participate in the feasibility study for these centers, and look forward to working with your staff in the future.

Sincerely,

JOHN W. MUMMA  
Regional Forester





